

**Statement by Bridget Quinn-Carey  
Chief Executive Officer, Hartford Public Library**

**In Support of State Library Funding  
February 21, 2017**

Public libraries enthusiastically serve our diverse and changing neighborhoods and communities in many different ways. Libraries are community centers, education hubs and provide a broad range of essential services that are free and available to all -- including those most in need. At the Hartford Public Library, and at many other libraries across the state, we provide literacy programs, adult basic education classes including pre-GED and GED preparation, language learning classes, access to community health care and legal information, job seeking services, access to technology and computers, cultural and civic engagement programs and exhibits, resources for non-English speakers, pathways to citizenship, passports and learning experiences for children of all ages from preschoolers through teens and college or career ready young adults. And of course our collections-- books, online learning databases, DVD's, audiobooks, ebooks, journals, magazines, newspapers.

Libraries provide these services, programs and collections to ensure that all residents of this great state of Connecticut and across the country can learn, succeed and thrive. Libraries are the great equalizer, the cornerstone of our democracy. There is no other place that can and does provide the breadth and depth of informational and educational resources and services that libraries provide. And it's free. In multiple formats, multiple languages, multiple points of view. This is critical to ensure that ALL people, regardless of their socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, ethnic background or country of origin, political viewpoint, gender, sexual orientation, or immigration status have a welcoming place where they can find trustworthy, professionally vetted information. This is what public libraries in the United States are all about.

We value facts and diverse perspectives -- giving all who enter through our doors, our catalogs or our websites the opportunity to find and peruse quality information and access to the help of dedicated, trained professionals. The services provided by public libraries are needed now more than ever.

We need to keep our libraries open, accessible to all, operating efficiently and in good condition. Funding from the State of Connecticut provides essential support that enables libraries to share materials between communities -- a benefit for all residents. State funding helps support the Connecticut Library Consortium, which in addition to many other services negotiates group pricing for goods and services for all libraries, resulting in significant cost savings for communities and institutions. State funding provides critical capital and administrative support for library facility renovations and construction. State funding ensures that libraries in communities and educational institutions have access to quality digital content and resources through online databases -- many of which are too costly for individual libraries (public, school or academic) to acquire on their own. The professional, knowledgeable, skilled and helpful staff at the State Library ensure that libraries have the critical support they need to ensure access to all and continue to strengthen our communities.

Public libraries are the most democratic of institutions offering free educational and cultural resources to all Connecticut residents. Now is the time to support libraries, because libraries support and empower people; the people who make our communities, towns, cities and state strong, smart and engaged.